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SUBJECT: UN ELECTIONS CHIEF CALLS DELAY OF ELECTIONS TO APRIL 2010
"A REASONABLE GAMBLE"

REF: A)KHARTOUM 785

B) KHARTOUM 714

D) KHARTOUM 696

E) KHARTOUM 578

F) KHARTOUM 400

G) KHARTOUM 223

1. (SBU) Summary: On June 30, poloffs attended the monthly meeting of the Electoral Assistance Group (EAG) in Khartoum. UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer Ray Kennedy noted that the National Electoral Commission (NEC) would imminently release a new electoral calendar, which calls for voter registration in November 2009 and polling in April 2010 (ref A). (Note: The revised calendar was released by the National Election Commission NEC later the same day. End note.) While this places both of these critical events during the dry season, Kennedy suggested that an April election could present problems should a Presidential or Vice Presidential Runoff be required, because such a runoff would have to be conducted during the rainy season. Furthermore, should the electoral calendar continue to slip, elections themselves run the risk of sliding into the 2010 rainy season. Kennedy also noted that scheduling voter registration at the beginning of the dry season (November 2009) rather than the end of it (previously planned by the NEC for June 2009), could present the challenge of a lack of time to fix damaged infrastructure such as roads and bridges. Regardless of these factors, Kennedy told donors that he believes the NEC's switch in dates is a "reasonable gamble." He stated that the NEC is careful not to label the electoral date slippage a political delay; rather a change in dates for technical reasons. End Summary

2. (SBU) During the June 30 meeting, Kennedy told donors that the United Nation's Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has begun sending teams to the state level in the North to support election preparation as requested by the NEC [Note: UNMIS has already deployed electoral teams to all of the states in Southern Sudan. End Note.] The NEC has specifically requested additional help from UNMIS with election preparation in Darfur and in the East. He stated that relations between the NEC and the UN continue to improve. The NEC will soon be co-locating offices with election advisors from UNMIS, UNDP, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and others for increased coordination.

3. (SBU) Kennedy said that the NEC is reluctant to discuss elections in the disputed, oil-rich region of Abyei. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Abyei residents are citizens of both South Kordofan State and Warrab State. This means they could, at least in theory, be able to vote twice when electing State-level National Assembly representatives. Kennedy emphasized that this issue must be resolved soon. UNMIS reps told donors that 71 parties have currently registered and been approved by the Political Party Affairs Council (PPAC) and seven more are awaiting approval. As of now, no deadline has been set for party

registration, and the number of parties registering is expected to increase.

¶4. (U) UNDP Representatives reported that donors contributing to the elections basket fund will soon bridge the funding gap of 10 million USD out of a total project budget of 68 billion USD. Denmark recently agreed to give 2.8 Million USD, Norway 2 million USD, Italy 2.7 million USD, UK 2.3 million USD, Netherlands 10 million Euros, Sweden 2.5 million USD, European Commission 2.5 million Euros, Spain has proposed 2 million USD but final approval is pending, Canada, France, Germany and Japan are still reviewing proposals.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The UN wishes to allay concerns about this latest delay in the scheduling of national elections, but donor countries fear more such delays in the process could be disastrous. The NEC seems satisfied that this second postponement is no great cause for concern, and is due only to the delayed release of the census results. While certainly not a deal breaker, the latest delay of elections from February to April 2010 does begin to pose potential problems for elections here. As UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer Kennedy pointed out, it leaves no room for further delays without pushing off part of the election process into the rainy season. In addition, with any further postponements, elections would begin to run up against preparations for the 2011 referendum. Given the limited capacity of Sudan's electoral organizing bodies, this could be a major problem. Increased cooperation between the NEC and the UN is positive and merits the U.S. government's continuing support and encouragement.

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